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PACOM FOR FPA AMB CHRISTY

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SUBJECT: AFM LIU JIEYI PRESSES TIMING CONCERNS ON 2009 PRC
POWER REPORT WITH DASD SEDNEY: OTHER ISSUES, DPRK,
NONPROLIFERATION

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1.
4 (b) and (d).

Summary

11. (S) In a February 27 meeting with Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Jieyi, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense David Sedney noted the positive direction in U.S.-China relations, and said the just-concluded Defense Policy Coordination Talks (DPCTs) were a good beginning. Both agreed on the importance of moving forward with the U.S.-China mil-mil relationship. Liu's main focus was an effort to get the United States not to issue the 2009 Chinese Military Power Report (CMPR) now. Liu said issuing the report the week of March 1 would result in public criticism, including by influential bloggers and netizens, that the PLA had sold out the Chinese people by having a friendly meeting with the U.S. DOD, which then immediately released a "hostile" report. Sedney responded that the CMPR was a Congressionally-mandated report, and therefore must be issued. (Comment: In a follow up one-on-one with DASD Sedney, Liu urged that if the report could not be stopped entirely, that it at least be delayed for 2-3 weeks in order to prevent damage to U.S.-PRC mil-mil relations. Several members of the PLA team made the same point at the DPCT dinner that night. End comment.) Liu said China supported continued nonproliferation cooperation between the United States and China, and that both sides should "keep in touch" about scheduling of bilateral nonproliferation dialogues. On North Korea, Liu said China had approached North Korea to discourage a missile launch, but called on all sides to "keep calm and exercise restraint," a theme later echoed by PLA officers at dinner. Liu said China was ready to assist with U.S. remains recovery efforts in China. End Summary.

U.S.-PRC Relations and Mil-Mil Discussions

12. (S) In a February 27 meeting with Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Jieyi, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense David Sedney noted the positive direction of U.S.-China relations, and said our aim is to build a positive and courteous relationship in the military-military relationship. Liu said the successful visit by Secretary Clinton and the two phone conversations between President Obama and President Obama demonstrated that China and the United States were building a more constructive and positive relationship on the "basis of respect and core national interests." China was

"pleased" with the current state of the relationship, Liu said. Sedney noted that the U.S.-China Defense Policy Coordination Talks (DPCTs) went well earlier in the day, and took place on the "basis of respect." Although the United States and China "had our differences" during the DPCT discussions, "we can still move forward," Sedney stressed. Sedney pointed out that it was important that each side was frank with each other. Liu responded that the U.S.-China mil-mil relationship could improve "based on ideas put forth by both sides." In a reference to arms sales to Taiwan, Liu said the United States should "avoid what happened in the past."

Chinese Military Power Report

13. (S) In anticipation of the impending release of the 2009 Report to Congress on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China (CMPR), Liu argued the report "did not serve any useful purpose in building the U.S.-China relationship," and urged that the United States "not release" the CMPR "this year or in the future." Sedney responded that this report was issued by Congressional mandate, and only Congress could remove that requirement. It would therefore be a "tragic mistake" for China's senior leaders to believe that this report was published "because we choose to do so," and thereby allow its publication to harm the U.S.-China relationship. Liu rejoined that "it would be a greater mistake to issue the report" and harm U.S.-China efforts to "face common challenges."

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14. (S) In a one-on-one conversation at the end of the meeting, Liu argued strongly that if the report had to be issued, that it at least be delayed for 2-3 weeks to avoid harming U.S.-PRC military relations. Liu said issuing the report the week of March 1 would open the PLA to criticism by bloggers and netizens, who would accuse those who held the DPCTs of selling out their country by having a friendly meeting with the U.S. DOD, which then immediately issued a "hostile report." At a dinner later the same day, senior members of the PLA delegation made the same point in stronger terms, focusing on the criticism they would face personally from the increasingly influential web community in China.

Nonproliferation Dialogues

15. (S) Sedney urged China to be ready to resume the Assistant Secretary-level Nonproliferation Dialogue as well as the Under Secretary-level Security Dialogue once new officials were in place in the new administration. Liu said China and the United States shared "common interests" in nonproliferation, were "cooperating very closely" on North Korea and Iran, and had "good bilateral cooperation" on "some specific cases" to "avoid suspicious transfers of controlled items." China intended "to continue" in this manner, said Liu, so "let's keep in touch" about the various dialogues.

North Korea

16. (S) Sedney emphasized the importance of the U.S.-China collaboration in the Six-Party Talks process, but warned that a North Korean missile launch would have "serious effects," including setting back efforts to denuclearize the Korean peninsula. "China doesn't have as much influence as you think," Liu responded, but it had been "talking to North Korea about this issue." China desired all sides to "keep calm and exercise restraint." Liu said three things were very important to China: maintaining peace and stability in the region; keeping the Six-Party Talks going; and working with the Permanent Security Council members to address the issue.

¶7. (S) At the DPCT dinner that night, PLA senior officers asked about reports that U.S. officials had threatened to shoot down the DPRK launch vehicle. They pointed out that such a U.S. "threat" would have the opposite effect than intended. The North Koreans were very proud and would react to threats by being intransigent.

Remains Recovery

¶8. (SBU) Sedney said the United States appreciates China's help in facilitating the recovery of the remains of U.S. servicemembers in China, and noted the upcoming visit in April by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Charles Ray to further these efforts. Liu said China was ready to assist.

¶9. (U) DASD Sedney cleared this message.
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